SENSING POST-FORDIST WORK LIFE

Recent Perspectives in the Ethnography of Work

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The article discusses the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the world of work and at the same time pleads for a critical reflection on the use of these concepts. It presents three German case studies conducted under the supervision of the author, which examine how this transition is experienced very differently: by mothers using managerial techniques of parenting, independent financial advisers, and manual workers in a picture-frame factory. The mothers see the changes as a challenge, the financial advisers as an opportunity, and the manual workers as a threat. Thus, ethnographic case studies in this field highlighting the diversity of work in the post-Fordist era enbable us to go beyond discourses that treat Fordism and post-Fordism as clearly separated and holistic entities.

Keywords: transformation of work, Fordism, post-Fordism, work ethnography, economization of work and life

All spheres of present-day society are affected profoundly by the post-Fordist world of work and the economization and commodification of social relationships. Arlie Russell Hochschild (2003) has demonstrated how commercial considerations have been shaping the modes of action and the patterns of feeling characterizing "private" life for some time. This has contributed to the fusion of the "private" and the "public" sphere: The "coaching" of families by professional advisers increasingly resembles the management strategies pursued in the world of business. For example, it is quite common for "coaches" to ask families to carry out "team-building exercises" and "evaluate" the behavior of individual family members. Conversely, corporations are adopting "pedagogic and therapeutic discourses" originally developed in closed, personal, therapeutic settings. In doing so, they transform intimate aspects of personhood into instruments of leadership (cf. Illouz 2006 43).

The following case study illuminates this state of affairs. It presents the work of Petra Schmidt, a Munich-based European Ethnologist, who has interviewed German working and non-working mothers from middle-class, liberal milieus.[1] Schmidt's work represents one of the three case studies presented in this paper. They emerged out of a Munich-based research project on "Spätmoderne Arbeits- und Lebenswelten" that examined the great variety of attitudes and practices of different groups of workers trying to cope with the challenges resulting from recent changes in work organization. [2] Informed by the complexity and ambiguity of the three cases, I will discuss both the key characteristics of the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the world of work and the shortcomings of the debates in the social sciences around this issue. If focused on the perspectives of actors on the shop floor and linked up with macro-contextual "structuring structures" in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu et al. (1997), ethnographic work can serve as an important research tool that allows us to reflect critically on and transcend dichotomous understandings of Fordism and post-Fordism. Starting with Schmidt's case study allows me to highlight some of the key characteristics ascribed to "post-Fordism".

On "Total Quality Mothers", the "Family Team", and "Training for the Job" from the Start

"Do your best!" – this is how Carla tends to challenge her six-year-old when he "once again 'deviates' from the social norm". She is a Munich-based mother of two boys, who are of pre-school age. Due to the recurring conflicts with her older son, Carla has decided to seek advice and practical help. Once a week, she is taking part in a "coaching program for parents" (Schmidt 2012: 160).

The market for parenting advice and education is currently expanding; the program in question is based on an elaborate regime of knowledge contributing to the optimization and professionalization of motherhood and parenthood. It relies on a system of rewards derived from "total quality management", a corporate strategy from Japan based on quality assurance and self-management[3]: There are constantly recurring demands for improved work ("continuous improvement"), which are meant to motivate the employees to perform at the highest level and to create a feeling of community. This strategy is based on a behaviorist system of rewards aimed at making the employees internalize management guidelines and motivate themselves.

The corresponding parenting program aims at implanting the principle of "continuous improvement" in the actions and thoughts of a child. As Schmidt puts it:

> The feedback provided has a supporting function. Vinzent gets it from his parents in the form (…) of small daily rewards, for example star-stickers and gummi bears. Once a week, there is also an "extensive evaluation" based on a "stars chart". These evaluations are reminiscent of the weekly meetings held in corporations dedicated to quality assurance. This approach to parenting also focuses on the improvement of *social skills*; it governs everyday actions and thoughts. The weekly feedback (…) creates a feeling of unity in the family – of having achieved something together. It mobilizes a "family team" that constantly operates in the spirit of "wanting improvement and optimization". In particular, Carla's attempt to constantly optimize both her son's behavior and her own, knowledge-based parenting strategies reveals the socially dominant ideals and expectations concerning the "right" way of parenting. (Schmidt 2012: 160f.)

The program promises that the acquisition of social skills pays off in the long run. It turns parenting into the targeted promotion of *soft skills,* and into an activity providing "training for the job" from the start.

> In this context, a technology of government is at work that aims at activating the self of children, or – as Bröckling (2000: 131) puts it – at engaging in acts of "total mobilization", which are meant to use mental and physical resources the optimal way. Besides, the example reveals what kind of strategies of self-regulation, self-disciplining, self-rationalization and self-mobilization are influencing both the physical and the mental aspects of the conduct of life today. (Schmidt 2012: 162)

Schmidt's case study demonstrates how mothers (and sometimes fathers if they take an appropriate responsibility for family matters) have become health experts, dieticians, coaches dedicated to the advancement of the offspring, and mediators preserving peace in the family (cf. Schmidt & Götz 2010). This development began during the Enlightenment: it was declared the primary task of bourgeois women to engage in the parenting and the moral education of her children; they were seen as being better equipped than uneducated wet nurses and nannies to prepare the children for their future careers (cf. Rosenbaum 1982). Today, the work of mothers involves providing their children both with a warm shelter for their regeneration and a training camp for career instruction. In the knowledge society, this is a highly complex task: Mothers with upper middle-class backgrounds are required to continuously learn more and optimize their performance at work, but they are also responsible for the monitoring and active coaching of their children.

Post-Fordist Realities of Work: The Blurring of Work and Life

Some of the most important issues of post-Fordism are highlighted by this case study: the ever more acute *blurring of work and life*; the *economization of all areas of life* including children's rooms; the importance of *self-activation* and *knowledge work*; and the *transformation of life into a project* based on *independent re-training* and the *permanent optimization* of the use of resources. I will further elaborate on these issues by drawing upon work research in the social sciences and, primarily, in European ethnology.[4] The key terms informing the academic discourses – *flexibilization, subjectification, mobilization, and precarization* – can be seen as seismographs of the zeitgeist and the current social climate. And yet, as they are only broad and undifferentiated categories for complex processes of social transformation, they tend to produce simplistic interpretative patterns. This sometimes obstructs our view on the underlying, more differentiated worlds of experience. The categories can thus only be used as preliminary "holding concepts" with a heuristic function: They direct us towards research questions, which, however, have to be fleshed out with reference to each specific case.

If such a context-sensitive and casuistic approach is chosen, the categories help us decipher the practices, attitudes, values and conflicts of the individual actors entangled in the discourses and politics of the "new" world of work. This then reveals that "the" transition from Fordism to post-Fordism is not a linear process. People interpret and tackle the challenges arising due to the transformation of work in different ways depending on factors such as biographic experiences; education and qualification; class and gender; and professional habitus (cf. Schönberger 2007).

The article seeks to outline the contribution of ethnographic approaches to the inter-disciplinary field of work research and to critically reflect on some of the issues that public debates on the transformation of work refer to when they make implicit comparisons between "past" and "present", which are often presented as holistic entities without internal differentiation. In doing so, I will shift the focus of the debate and point out the challenges that we have to tackle: first, we have to develop a more differentiated understanding of periodization overcoming the strict separation between Fordism and post-Fordism; second, we have to move beyond "national" perspectives, which are often informed by the views of the "old" middle classes and the established, educated milieus.

Post-Fordism – both in its "objectified" essence and its meaning ascribed by the public and scientific discourses – is a comprehensive transformation project shaped and propelled by an aspiring middle class which promotes a new type of a "creative" and individualistic "entrepreneurial self" (Bröckling 2007). Post-Fordism is characterized by knowledge work, the ability to use the new information technologies efficiently, international corporations, transnational mobility, and an increasing number of freelancers working without the social protection and benefits offered by companies. As a result, there are profound changes to the prevalent conceptions of work: wage labor no longer creates communities and identities in the same way. Work and free time, work and non-work, blur and mix in terms of their contents, times, spaces and functions (Gottschall & Voß 2005; Herlyn et al. 2009).

Table soccer in an IT firm, the provision of massages and yoga classes in the workplace through the employer – these are examples of how feelings formally linked to free time such as well-being, recreation and relaxation have become constitutive elements of a new culture of work in and beyond the creative industries. In the designer offices of the professionals, spaces of autonomy, originally gained through worker resistance, overlap with the incentives provided by the company on the grounds of economic calculations. There is an *informalization* of work, which covers up its character of being work at all – at least in the ads of the companies (cf. Barth 2009). In many sectors of the expanding creative industries, circles of friends, customers and colleagues have become interwoven and now form new, productive networks.

Knowledge-based society needs and produces "immaterial labor" (Lazzarato 1998) more than ever; the creative workers, the PR agencies, the web designers and communications experts all become part of a new ensemble of leading industries. Certain characteristics of the subject – such as interpersonal skills, expertise in communication, and the independent development of ideas – become essential aspects of a new type of labor power. One example of this development is that the knowledge worker represents a new role model for mothers: they are supposed to keep on learning about ideal ways of boosting the career chances of their children; and to see their children as projects requiring the active investments of time and energy. Similarly, private companies and public institutions demand from their employees that they invest in personal traits and their "soft skills". On the other hand, employees – both skilled manual workers and service workers – increasingly demand that they be treated as independent actors with a stake in the business process.

This demand of a new type of labor power reflects a process of "dual subjectification" (cf. Kleemann, Matuschek & Voß 2003): on the one hand, subjectification is desired by the employees; on the other hand, it is molded by the company-owners according to their own goals. In any case, it is accompanied by the expansion of economic strategies into all areas of everyday life; the boundaries of wage labor become blurred, and work is increasingly separated from the firm. This is demonstrated by the example provided at the start of this article: the "total quality" mother. Günter Voß and Kerstin Rieder highlight another instance of this development: Online customers of retail companies (e.g., IKEA and Amazon) become unpaid "members of staff". They are "working customers" designing construction kits, or in other cases, compiling books or mixing organic mueslis online; they (are invited to) contribute to product marketing; and they participate in quality assurance for free by evaluating the services provided (Voß & Rieder 2005).

The separation of work from the firm can be observed everywhere; it is propelled, governed and shaped by the labor market policy of the welfare state in transformation (Lessenich 2008): the emergence of "enterprises of the self" (the official German category "Ich-AGs") (Witte 2007) and the state-driven expansion of temporary and precarious work are processes informed by a new role model: the "entrepreneur in labor power" (in German: *Arbeitskraftunternehmer*) (Pongratz & Voß 2004). This entrepreneur offers all the resources and capacities in his/her possession on the market – and does so without benefiting from the security provided by labor contracts. The most important capital of such precarious start-ups of "activated" freelancers, which are usually born out of poverty, is not a qualification obtained through formal education. It is a set of ideas and capacities that conform to the zeitgeist, can be presented in an alluring manner, and can be converted into a service. In the process, creativity is commodified in many different ways and becomes a business factor (cf. Löfgren 2003).

It seems that being such a creative "flexible human"[5] – and internalizing principles such as being mobile, taking risks, being service-oriented and constantly available for others – comes with a price. It becomes increasingly difficult (and, in some cases, less desirable) for people in the Western world to achieve the security of clearly defined, long-term careers and of relatively stable living conditions.

But what is the temporal and spatial horizon, the vantage point of the discourses of post-Fordist mobilization and precarization (Castel & Dörre 2009; Götz & Lemberger 2009)? This question is relevant no matter how we see the transformation of work – whether we speak of a "corrosion of character"

(Sennett 1998) or greet this transformation enthusiastically as aliberation from the shackles of Fordist routine and alienation (see, e.g., Friebe & Lobo 2006). In other words, it is necessary to reflect on some of the values and institutions that characterized the "golden age" of the welfare state in the West and greatly influenced the habitus of employees with a middle-class background and their families (as well as working-class people to some extent). According to this habitus, certain achievements of Fordism and the conveniences of modern life are taken for granted, and they have given rise to a value system that has informed the common sense of the middle classes for decades. This value system forms the backdrop against which the transformation of work life is examined most of the time.

Assessing the Transformation of Values and Life Courses: Fordism as a Vantage Point and a Background of Analysis

Concerning the ideological basis and the vantage point of current evaluations of post-Fordism, there is one issue that should be considered first: Up until the 1980s, it was still possible for large parts of the male population to build on a biographical narrative based on the breadwinner model and the principle of working permanently in a single job – of having a career without ruptures. In the post-Fordist era, the dominant forms of work and life and the corresponding narratives on work biographies have changed. According to Ulrich Beck (1986), "risk society" is characterized by processes of detraditionalization and precarization, as well as by a tendency for the economization and rationalization of work and life. As a result, the traditional notion of a "normal biography" characterized by three phases becomes questionable. As long as the standardized, disciplinary system of Fordism[6] dominated, large parts of the population could expect "conventionalized" biographical transitions and a certain degree of upward social mobility. The first phase of the "normal biography", childhood and adolescence, was marked by the suspension of learning (the German "Bildungsmoratorium"). This was followed by a long phase of waged work and rearing children. The final phase was the pension age, which roughly coincided with the last third of life. Of course, it needs to be stressed that this was a male biography.

The predominance of a *gendered labor market* equating the "normal family" with the breadwinner model was another hallmark of Fordism. It centered the work biographies of women on motherhood. Accordingly, female occupational profiles resembled domestic work, were badly paid, and offered no opportunities for training and career advancement (cf. Beck-Gernsheim 1976). We all know that this has not changed much, as is demonstrated, for example, by the occupational profiles of nurses (Schweiger 2011), shop assistants (Götz 1997; Krohn 2008) and hairdressers (Braun 2013). In the decades before the cultural revolution of 1968, the breadwinner model required middle-class women to refrain from "working for real"; it was deemed unsuitable to work outside the family home. Undoubtedly, this model had (and still has) certain attractions for some parts of the population.

Historically speaking, the post-war period marked the first time when even manual workers could orient themselves towards this model – at least in some of the European welfares states of the late 1950s to the 1970s. This Fordist era was characterized by a relatively high level of productivity, and the "social integration of the working class in terms of wages, work hours and prices" (Schönberger 2007: 66); affluence and the new opportunities for consumption had strong, integrating effects. In this context, some people speak of "Deutschmark nationalism" in relation to West Germany. Considering the anti-national mood in the country after the war, this was the only real form of national identification in everyday life – maybe with the exception of sports (Götz 2011).

However, the traditional order of gender-specific "normal biographies" characterized by a three-phase life cycle has eroded in the post-Fordist era, even if it still informs current debates and personal career expectations to a certain degree. "Normal biographies" are now marked by the increased importance, in quantitative and qualitative terms, of its two extremes: the phase of adolescence has become longer, and the same applies to old age (it takes longer, but if "employability" is considered, it also starts earlier). The changes in the labor market and the corresponding role models, which prescribe and consolidate these changes, are responsible for this state of affairs.

Due to the labor market strategies of business and increasingly shorter working lives, the middle phase of life is transformed – consider old-age part-time working and the complete de-valuation of people over 50 in some branches, who end up in permanent unemployment. And yet, the dominant economic and labor-market policies suggest that this is not affordable over the medium-term due to demographic change and the resulting lack of suitable workers. As a result, the pension age is raised gradually.

In sum, work continues to determine and to structure the life cycle. But in contrast to the Fordist era, it is no longer certain how exactly this happens, and what the effects are. Long-term plans are increasingly surrounded by uncertainty, which also affects the middle classes; the qualifications, occupations, careers around which people used to develop personal plans become unstable. The identities, plans (including family planning[7]), and social ties of the "flexible human" (Sennett 1998) are challenged through forms of work that require dealing with multi-level mobility, the threat of redundancy and the according biographical ruptures. Many of the people whose habitus was shaped in the Fordist era are ill-prepared for these changes – at least according to the cultural pessimists contributing to this discourse (see, e.g., Sennett 1998; Schultheis 2007; Voß 2009).

Along these lines, Richard Sennett displays a deep discontent with the inhumane nature of "flexible capitalism". According to him, the "defensive community" sought by "the flexible human" as a shelter against the trials of insecure labor relations has nothing in common with the Fordist communities, which were characterized by production and creative resistance. Sennett (1998) remarks pointedly that late modern capitalism has cut people's ties to the location. He comments, in a slightly stern and pessimistic manner, on the changed meaning of the relationship between space and work in the global economy, which is characterized by fluid movements that are driven by financial markets. The mobilities related to jobs, commodities, and humans – as well as the processes of deterritorialization linked to them – are both a precondition and a by-product of globalization. However, they exist alongside new personal strategies of striking roots and multiple forms of becoming part of a community; there are plural practices of constructing and combining old and new homelands (see Seifert 2010). And the so-called "normal (nuclear) family", whose death has been announced frequently, has simply changed its shape. The traditional family is replaced by plural forms; multi-locality and blurred gender roles have – to a certain degree – become a manageable, "normal" pattern.

Importantly, my line of argument should not be understood as contrasting the "inhumanity" and "cruelty" of post-Fordism with an idyllic, sheltered pre-industrial world or with a safe, predictable, and affluent work and family life under Fordism. It is common knowledge that the rigid community of the village shackled the life of the individual, and that monotonous work in fixed groups can be straining. However, in one respect, Sennett is right: The precarization of work and the corresponding processes of disembedding and exclusion may lead to defensive, even destructive forms of community-building that (re-)produce oppressive ideologies and violence: Empirical studies on East Germany reveal the link between the rise of neo-Nazi organizations and processes of precarization and social disintegration. The people in the areas affected are immobilized; and they compensate for this state of affairs by creating communities that exclude "foreigners" (cf. Dörre 2006).

There is a second aspect of current debates in the media, which confirms Richard Sennett's verdict that there is a *change in the dominant norms*. According to him, dependency and routines are de-valued in the moral sense of the word. Undoubtedly, terms like "activation", "mobilization", "flexibilization", "responsibility", "risk" and "creativity" act as contemporary strategies of "self-government and the government of others", in certain situations, they are producing a type of rationality that then becomes hegemonic (cf. Bröckling, Krasmann & Lemke 2004: 9f.): the imperative of "activation" serves to legitimize and justify the transformation of the welfare state into an "activating" state (Lessenich 2008); according to this discourse, dependent people are "redundant people" (Bauman 1997) – they are not just weak but also "parasitic". Recipients of "Hartz IV" (a benefit recently introduced in Germany providing a basic income) are time and again attacked as "benefit scroungers" (cf. Lehnert 2009). This is the flipside of the existence of a young, creative, urban milieu enthusiastically embracing the "end of jobs for life" (Friebe & Lobo 2006) and transforming it into a new, possibly temporary freedom. On the macro-level of discourse, a narrative of independence and mobility prevails. According to Sennett (1998), this narrative undermines two of the foundations of social ties: mutual trust and the commitment to a common goal, which result from the recognition of reciprocal dependence and the ability to enter conflicts. Due to the existence of trans-local companies and the changing places of business, flexible practices of power prevent the creation of productive forms of trust, which also means that humans beings become more vulnerable.

In her work from the early 1980s, Arlie Russell Hochschild pointed out another aspect of this vulnerability – even deformation of the personality – associated with post-Fordism. She enquired into the psychological cost of a new and very subtle form of alienation affecting people's character traits by studying the work of "flight attendants" and "bill collectors" (Hochschild 1983; see Götz 2013). In particular, this type of alienation is experienced by people working in post-Fordist, service sector jobs. In interactions with customers, they have to marketize their feelings, conduct, and entire outward appearance. In other words, they have to shape their emotional display and physical appearance according to certain "feeling rules", and to ensure that the customers are not able to decode this "marketized" version of the self and the business interests behind it. The potential consequences of working on an "authentic" demeanor, in particular the alienation experienced in this process, have to be covered up.

In this context, "alienation" refers to the fact that the service workers have to repress stress and "unsuitable" feelings like anger when they are interacting with customers – under conditions of an extreme intensification of work. The extraction of labor power becomes a permanent process without limits. If we use traditional images of the body, this process of extraction today targets the *inside,* the feelings and, importantly, the immaterial field of knowledge – and not so much the *outside*, the "routinized" body movements that used to be associated with industrial work. Accordingly, the symptoms of work-related medical conditions change. The "exhausted self" (Keupp 2010), the burn-out as a stage on the long way into depression, increasingly affects service workers and mothers of young children. It can be kept secret for some time – in contrast to the physical strain of industrial work, which quickly imprinted itself on the bodies of the workers and hence was visible at a young age.

An Ethnographic Approach: The Munich Case Studies on Work Life

In the last sections, I have sketched some characteristics of Fordism and post-Fordism that are ascribed to these "eras" at the level of discourse. However, these characteristics infiltrate different contexts of work and life in profoundly different ways. Ethnographic case studies allow us to depict the perspective of individual actors and their positions in the social space (cf. Bourdieu et al. 1997), and to relate the practices, strategies, and values of individual actors to the structural conditions of a certain regime of work. They demonstrate in how far this particular regime creates a work culture that fuses Fordist and post-Fordist elements in new and surprising ways. It may very well be that young, educated, and creative networkers can turn the imperative of activation into something positive. However, there is also a differentiated, constantly changing panorama of novel activities in the expanding service sector that are precarious and only exist temporarily. In this context, the threat of an "end to permanent employment" (Friebe & Lobo 2006) is accompanied by economic and emotional crises: the blurring of work and life and the corresponding forms of self-management are experienced as a burden – and they trigger resistance.

Case studies also have the advantage that they provide deep insights into such strategies and practices of individual *commitment* or (situational) *resistance* against the demands created by post-Fordist processes of workplace restructuring. In doing so, case studies are an appropriate heuristic means of assessing the validity and relevance of the "master narratives" of precarization, flexibiliziation and subjectification with regard to particular sectors, vocations and milieus. Moreover, ethnographic fieldwork also allows us to learn about how individuals are still bound by the Fordist habitus and value system and therefore get into conflict with the new work conditions. And they draw our attention to other cases and milieus where the processes of subjectification and flexibilization as well as the blurring of work and life are experienced as a challenge. Here, case studies potentially work as a kind of "laboratory" enabling us to observe the emergence of a new habitus and type of worker.

The question how the new work-related role models affect different industries and milieus was addressed by the Munich-based ethnographic research project mentioned above (cf. Götz, Huber & Kleiner 2010). For several months, twelve young ethnographers carried out interviews and participant observations in different fields – in agencies and task forces; in offices and companies; in welfare services catering for the "primary" and for the "secondary" labor market. Everywhere, the transformation of labor markets was visible – and so was the current economic and financial crisis.

The case studies were about understanding the logics of action produced by milieu, gender and occupation, and about revealing habitual orientations and practices contributing to the cultures of post-Fordist work. Accordingly, the following case study focuses on the professional habitus of independent financial advisers. It brings to light the mental dispositions, evaluations, rationalities and practices specific to this field, which informed the reactions of the advisers to the emergence of the current financial crisis.

The "Trust-Building Work" of Financial Advisers

Thomas J. Heid produced portraits of a number of independent financial advisers. He examined how they informed their customers about the financial crisis, how they coped with the damage to the reputation of their occupation, and how they saw their own future. In the interviews, the advisers treated him like a customer, informed and convinced him regarding their services, which enabled him to reflect on their conventional practices of interacting with their clients. In order to find out about the professional habitus of the advisers, Heid examined the self-stylizations of the advisers and the contradictions emerging in interaction, taking in account their dress style, the design of their offices, and the glossy leaflets provided to the customers.

Heid's portraits revealed the strategies, practices and ingredients of *trust-building work*. In times of a loss of trust in financial investments, trust literally had to be "produced" – it had to be tailored to the personal needs of the individual customer: "In relation to the emotion work carried out, it can be observed that Mr. Kaiser actively works on his attitudes. His aim is to appear convincing for his customers (and the interviewer), and to create positive feelings and trust" (Heid 2010: 104). Kaiser admitted that after the stock market crash in 2009, some customers were in need of more frequent contact, i.e., "telephone calls, e-mails and face-to-face meetings aimed at exchanging information and offering advice and reassurance". Nevertheless, his rapport with the customers was mostly "unchanged and relaxed", "friendly" and characterized by "a great deal of contentment and trust". Interestingly, he did not address the contradiction between the two statements.

> He seemed to separate between the anxieties of his customers caused by abstract events in the financial markets and, as he put it, the unbroken trust in his person and his professional attitude.

> His openly displayed ease and his professional demeanor, which was created by body work (gestures, facial expressions, speech, clothes), seemed to be the product of work that had to be carried out over and over again. Both appeared to be the basis of making deals – at least since the onset of the crisis. (Heid 2010: 104f.)

Against this backdrop, I would like to provide some more detailed observations by Thomas Heid on the *genesis* of trust-building work in the financial consulting sector:

> Mr. Kaiser never gives the impression that his "merchant's honor" is insulted, or that he has made a mistake. Quite the contrary: throughout the conversation with the interviewer, he oozes self-confidence. He proudly announces that he does "a very good job" for his customers, and that he can offer products or broker deals based on his *business portfolio* with a clear conscience. (…) In conversation, it is noticeable that Mr. Kaiser has the ability to gently guide conversations towards targets. Mr. Kaiser's rhetoric is characterized by his cautious, adequate, and precise choice of words; he uses the extensive specialist vocabulary of his profession carefully and in a matter-of-fact way. His evident ability to negotiate and his eloquence are supported by his gestures, which involve handling an expensive biro. The air of confidence exuded by Mr. Kaiser is underlined by his correct sitting posture and his choice of clothes (…). The consultation is pervaded by his subtle attempt to convince customers – with the help of many practical examples and in an understated yet vigorous manner – of the financial service offered. For this purpose, Mr. Kaiser even presents his own online current account as a case in point. (Heid 2010: 114)

Thomas Heid experiences, in his own skin and in a prototypal manner, how Mr. Kaiser interacts with customers. In this situation, Heid becomes the focal point of cultural analysis: he acts as a projection screen for the adviser, who does not even abandon his professional conduct and his work of persuasion in an interview with an ethnographer. Despite the damaged reputation of financial services (or in an act of defiance?), the advisers portrayed by Heid appear to trust in themselves and their investment strategies. They rely on the discursive logic and the apparent plausibility of individually calculated life risks, which they first calculate and construct, and then pretend to fight with customized security schemes. Due to the general decline in trust in financial investments, it is more important than ever that there is a "trustworthy" adviser whose personality serves to alleviate such concerns. In other words, the consultant acts as a concrete, accessible, locally materialized personalization of a regime of security. Yet in reality, this regime is based on incomprehensible, incalculable investments evading controls and vanishing in the opaque space of financial capitalism.

The trust-building work described here is based on a rationalized and empathetic manner of speaking, which was apparent in conversations with customers, the advisers' clothes and bodies, and the "props" on display. Independent financial consulting relies on such symbolic practices of personalization that compensate for the lack of transparency in the financial markets – and the importance of this mechanism is amplified in a situation of crisis. This explains why the advisers portrayed do not just have to act in a manner exuding security, but also to *feel* and embody it. In times of crisis, the value of personal traits, in particular empathy, leadership and the skill of trust-building, is increasing – and it is remunerated exorbitantly (think of bonuses!). This also reveals how far the economization of psychotherapeutic techniques of guiding conversations and, by this means, of human emotions and attitudes has advanced. Eva Illouz (2006, 2009) has demonstrated that this process is a characteristic trait of "emotional capitalism".

In sum, post-Fordism is characterized by the simultaneous creation and professional management of insecurity. A market for advice and training has emerged that governs the body and the psyche, feelings of security and success. It turns such feelings into the objects and also the instruments of work.

In the post-Fordist landscape of knowledge, the dominant guidelines, insights and practices have become more differentiated. In the case of the financial advisers, this relates to the diversification of financial investments and the privatization of provision measures for one's old age and medical care in a deregulated state; in the case of the "total quality" mothers, it refers to the fact that childcare and education are increasingly being a privatized matter of ambitious knowledge-based monitoring and training. The creation and management of this knowledge and its incorporation into people's habitus have become complex forms of work, which require extra time – in particular in fields close to domestic work like child- and eldercare[8], where labor is governed by a strict regime of time and economization.

A final case study was conducted in the milieu of factory workers. It reveals how workers experience the transition from a Fordist regime of work to newer, more subjectified forms of work. In contrast to the financial advisers and the professionalized mothers, the factory workers do not simply comply with the new, post-Fordist regime of work and use the techniques of self-management expected from them. In their case, tensions and acts of resistance are not transformed into productive powers; rather, they become a nuisance and a source of fear.

A Picture Frame Factory in Munich – The Worker's Habitus and the Resistance against a Subjectified Regime of Work

In the role of a worker, *Olga Reznikova* (2010) conducted participant observations in a Munich workshop. The firm had been producing picture frames for generations; it was now facing tough competition from China in the form of "cut-price frames". The new boss had lain off some of the workers in order to prevent bankruptcy. When the fieldwork took place, no one knew whether there would be further job losses.

The workers had been employed by the firm for a long time; on the grounds of an internal reorganization, the new boss had demanded for some time that they engage in practices of self-organization and take more responsibility for the work process. However, the new order was at odds with the worker habitus[9] and created acts of resistance. The workforce, already deeply upset by the redundancies, experienced the introduction of a new, subjectified regime of work as a dual crisis: a personal jobs crisis and crisis of work organization according to unfamiliar forms of governance which forced the workers to be pro-active, take initiative, and replace surveillance through self-control.

Reznikova's ethnography demonstrates how narratives of the workers can be interpreted in a context-sensitive fashion. In her work, such narratives emerge out of single episodes, in which individual workers explain their conceptions of a legitimate regime of work with reference to the past of the company.

The old, Fordist regime of production was characterized by the distribution of clearly-defined tasks and the existence of obvious temporal-spatial and social boundaries. After several decades of employment, it had inscribed itself in the habitus of the workers, who were mostly of Italian origin. The legitimacy of this order had partly resulted from the fact that it had helped the workers to integrate into German society. It was tied to a single person: the old boss, who acted as a patron offering the workers protection and helping them to acquaint themselves with their new social environment.

> "The new boss, Franz, is not seen as the legitimate boss (…): He doesn't want to do things the way we've always done them, the way Gregorie (the foreman; O.R.) has done them, the way the old boss [has done them]. He wants to go in a different direction. But that's not on!"
> "What's the other direction you're talking about?"
> "Well, for instance, he takes a form: 'Marie, I'll give you this form [an order form containing deadlines, models etc.; O.R.], and you'll have to know when these tasks will be done.' Then you move on – and you're supposed to pass this form to the person next in the production line. But that person has a look at the form and leaves it somewhere. And then someone else shouts: where is the form? And nobody has got a clue. Because I'm not

> responsible for the form! We've told him at various point that he should do it the way Gregorie did it. But instead of telling me what I have to do first, and [what I have to do] after that, he tells me that he has sold everything [the frames] already. I have to think about how to do this, I have to take care of this form. But [I say:] no, thank you! It's not my shit, I'm not the boss. And everything continues to go wrong. I'm not keen on working longer hours; all this isn't mine." (Reznikova 2010: 45)

This episode is centered on the order form, which acts as a symbol that demonstrates what kind of attitudes and experiences cause the workers to perceive the subjectified practices of work as unreasonable, inadequate and a threat to their existence. From the vantage point of the "worker habitus" (Wittel 1998), the new freedom demanded by the new boss, which entails taking responsibility and forming a team involved in the planning and the logistics of production, appears to be an expression of confusion and bad organization. It seems that work has to be divided up and distributed in a clearly defined fashion, and it has to be straightforward.

The workers accept the boundaries between those "at the top" and those "at the bottom" as long as the activities of the "boss" conform to two criteria: the projections concerning his role in terms of protection and responsibility, which are a reflection of the workers' socialization, and the clear limits placed on work activities and working time that are a product of the Fordist class compromise. The workers put up with capitalist control and the fact that "all this isn't theirs" (as the worker quoted puts it vigorously) as long as the responsibility for certain decisions is not delegated to them. Reznikova concludes:

> A sheet of paper can symbolize the new hegemonic demands, which force the workers to include planning and administration in their "proper tasks" (…). But the order form passed on from position to position also represents an anonymous type of leadership lacking presence: the boss walking around and giving orders (…) is replaced by the duty to regulate oneself and to operate as a self-reliant team. The circulating order form becomes the symbol for a new technology of leadership and discipline aimed at establishing self-government, which is contested (…) by the workers. (Reznikova 2010: 47)

The new demands do not only contravene the embodied habitus of Fordism (work as a means of earning money and a physical activity marked by routine and subordination; a clear separation between work and free time), but they also have no rational and practical justification for the actors. Quite the contrary: "The new social order does not offer advantages to the workforce examined here; in reality, it is accompanied by the threat of redundancies" (Reznikova 2010: 47).

Post-Fordist Regimes of Work: Crises and Opportunities

The Munich project gives diverging answers to the question how post-Fordist, subjectified regimes of work are lived, experienced, justified, subverted and rejected. The cases reveal what different developments at the macro-level mean for certain actors and occupational groups affected, for example the current financial crisis, the processes of rationalization resulting from globalization, and the unfamiliar, subjectified regimes of work.

The examples, which to some degree give conflicting accounts of the developments in question, demonstrate how responsibility – as well as the capacity to actively address risks, the consequences of economic downturns, and the effects of subjectification – is distributed unevenly across different social groups. Those who created the risks were also those most capable of dealing with the crisis: By providing "calming" advice, the financial advisers were able to partly turn their customers' fear of financial losses into a positive force and an economic strategy for themselves; they delegated the responsibility for the trouble in the financial markets to other financial advisers (and consultancies) with "worse" investment products. Of course, the people employed in the "real economy" – those working on the "shop floor" and in the sphere of production – are as dependent on the developments in the world market as the financial advisers. The advisers, however, suggest that they are capable of actively and successfully managing the crisis – and they benefit from it.

Research based on individual case studies explains in a graphic manner how a range of social factors determine whether people are able to cope with post-Fordist forms of work or not. These factors include class, gender, age, occupation, and education, but also (and increasingly) lifestyle and networks of family, friends, and work contacts. In other words, it is negotiated along these lines whether subjectified, post-Fordist conditions of work are perceived as a state of insecurity or as an extension of autonomy and creativity – as a burden (in the case of the factory workers) or as an improvement and a challenge (in the case of the professionalized mothers). In some of the "younger" lines of business, a new habitus based on the "homo oeconomicus" (Schultheis 2007) has become dominant, and this seems to have been a smoother process than elsewhere. This new habitus concerns in particular IT, the network-based creative industries, and financial consulting – i.e., sectors where people use their lifestyle and the milieus they inhabit in order to market their services.

In contrast, there is very little room for older workers, unskilled manual workers and migrants. Members of these groups are stressed or upset because they are suddenly expected to become people with a subjectified and flexible habitus (cf. Reznikova 2010). It is not a coincidence that women with medium or low qualifications predominate in sectors where a permanent link between subjectification, rationalization, and customized standardization is emerging. Examples are eldercare and healthcare (Schweiger 2011), as well as the "lower" segments of the service sector such as retail: shop assistants have to do interaction and emotion work, but they are still located in standardized work environments, which are characterized by assembly-line practices involving the moving and selling of goods (Götz 1997; Krohn 2008).

"Sedentariness" vs. Mobility: Further Reflections on a Simplistic Dichotomy

A good standard of living and "sedentariness" thanks to life-long employment in a single firm, a clear separation between different tasks at work and clear hierarchies, a clear distinction between work and non-work – for the majority of workers, these principles were only realistic goals during the relatively short era of Fordism. The picture frame factory can be regarded as a typical Fordist workspace. Yet even under the Fordist regime of work, the boundaries between work and non-work blurred in some respects – especially in family businesses (cf. Lemberger 2007): the old boss of the picture frame factory, for example, acted as a patron and supported his immigrant workers in their attempts to become integrated in German society. It appears that the notion of "Fordism" is a construction; next to the Fordist realities of work, pre-industrial life worlds continued to exist – for example in agriculture, where industrialization remained limited for a long time, and where holistic lifestyles and gendered practices of work predominated (see Konvalinka 2013).

Nevertheless, in a Western, industrialized nation such as Germany, the post-war era of Fordism – even if its characteristics did not apply everywhere – had a profound effect on people's consciousness. For several decades, the Fordist regime formed an important and fixed part of state policies and business strategies, of public discourses, and of the habitual orientations of many workers.[10] The values and modes of work of Fordism and the principles of a "normal biography" and a "normal family" with a male breadwinner became commonly held ideas. Today, these ideas are still dominating political and academic debates on "work in new times" (see Götz, Huber & Kleiner 2010). It is necessary to critically reflect on them and to point out that they emerged under specific *historical and regional conditions* – a fact that is often neglected in the current debates on "modern" principles of work and life.[11] Such a critique of the historical and regional biases of current narratives of post-Fordism should address the fact that new developments in the world of work cannot be grasped adequately if the label of *post*-Fordism is applied too quickly, and if these developments are simply related to a narrow and one-dimensional understanding of Fordism. The developments in question often do not conform to a linear logic and to pre-fabricated dichotomies.

Assessing the three case studies, I suggest that there is a problem at stake within the frequently used opposition between a sedentary/immobile past and a present characterized by spatial and social mobility as well as "patchwork biographies" marked by ruptures. It seems necessary to deconstruct this view because many contributors to the debates on transformation processes (often implicitly) use such simplistic dichotomies. It is often overlooked that permanent employment and sedentary work lives were only a guiding principle in the relatively short Fordist era.

More than 30 years ago, Hermann Bausinger (1978) warned, in an article on identity, that we should not use under-complex generalizations and dichotomies when we distinguish between the pre-industrial and the industrial/post-industrial modes of work and community building. The often assumed social, spatial and temporal homogeneity, the closeness and immobility of pre-industrial, rural communities needs to be qualified: the pre-industrial, peasant population was indeed mobile, and there were "patchworks" of work activity. In urban market places, it encountered different life worlds and horizons, so that the intergenerational assumptions guiding rural life were changed through new experiences.[12] Along these lines, Orvar Löfgren (1995) has argued that terms fashionable in certain academic discourses such as *post*-modernity and *post*-traditionalism cover up the fact that Swedish peasants in pre-modern times spent more time on the road trading than at their farms working and being "rooted". Similarly, Katrin Lehnert, a Ph.D. candidate at LMU Munich, is currently conducting a historical and archival micro-study on short-distance mobilities in the Saxon-Bohemian-Silesian border area during early industrialization. She argues that the principle of a sedentary working population only became dominant when the (border) regime of the nascent national state emerged (see Lehnert 2012). Moreover, she observed a kind of anachronism: capitalism was even in rural areas increasingly based on mobile workers while state control needed settled and disciplined workers.

On the one hand, people had the opportunity or were forced to settle after having moved to urban places where labor was being concentrated, and this process can be regarded as a by-product of the formation of modern, national labor markets. On the other hand, there is no doubt that industrialization entailed new forms of spatial and social mobility and the differentiation characteristic of modern job markets: the field of wage labor became more multifaceted, and work increasingly took place outside the home. The imperatives of effort and social advancement became dominant. They were linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie, the leading class of so-called "first modernity" (cf. Beck & Bonß 2001). This was accompanied by the constant creation of new jobs and niches. As we all know, "first modernity" was characterized not just by industrialization and the consolidation of the bourgeoisie as a political and economic power, but also by the emergence of a social order based on the national state. Both became guiding principles and social realities in Europe: "national economies" emerged, and the modern national state increasingly regulated labor markets and qualifications with the help of social, educational and work-related institutions. Besides, it created clear-cut communities along the lines of class and milieu and ensured that its members remained immobile to a certain extent: In this world of production halls and offices (cf. Lauterbach 1998) everyone was disciplined and formed through a permanent job, a clearly defined role. As Max Weber already recognized, the organization of the military lived on in the world of work (cf. Sennett 1998): there were chains-of-command, military-style careers, and clear-cut, pyramid organizational structures, which entailed rigid occupational identities.[13]

In sum, approaches should be questioned that operate with a dichotomy between a relatively immobile era of pre-modernity marked by homogeneous, stable communities and identities and a highly mobile era of (post-)modernity characterized by relatively fluid, hybrid identities. The prevalence of this bias is also a result of the agenda of historical migration research, which has mostly been looking at long-distance movements of migration.[14] In other words, the short-distance mobilities of traders, seasonal workers, and commuters working in the new factories have so far been neglected. As Lehnert's dissertation will show, both historical work studies and migration research should examine the mobilities in early capitalism – especially those of people mobilized due to poverty, who had to sell their labor power in the emerging labor markets and were self-dependent, precarious workers.[15]

Beyond the Fordist/Post-Fordist Paradigm: Transcending National and Middle-Class Perspectives

Today, the achievements of Fordism discussed no longer represent guiding principles and social realities for an increasing number of people, among them members of the middle classes.[16] Academics and journalists have argued time and again that this is the product of at least three developments: the decline in the power of the national state, which has been deregulated; the substantial transformation and the neo-liberal restructuring of the world of work, which has been globalized; and the emergence of "shareholder capitalism", which is driven by the expansion of financial markets.[17]

Despite of these powerful developments: As the case study on the picture frame factory showed, the Fordist habitus has remained significant in some sectors of industry – despite re-structuring within firms and processes of technification and de-regulation (see, e.g., Müske 2010; Wittel 1998). In other contexts, for example in the much-discussed field associated with the "Digital Bohemia", the "end of permanent employment" (Friebe & Lobo 2006) is celebrated as a liberation of creativity. The new, "flexible human" (cf. Sennett 1998) subscribing to the "post-Fordist conduct of life" (Schönberger 2007: 81) does not just seem to have become a new guiding principle, but part of a new habitual arrangement concerning work. The cases of the financial consultants and the "total quality mothers" are proof that there are different forms of active commitment to a novel, highly subjectified lifestyle marked by an almost complete blurring of work and life.

Young, well-connected, self-employed entrepreneurs tend to constitute another field that is not (or no longer) dominated by Fordist patterns of thinking and acting. Martina Schwingenstein, a Munich graduate, explored in her master's thesis the formation of a new field of discourse and practice dominated by "social entrepreneurs". They are members of the educational elite; in their self-image and activities, they attempt to reconcile conceptions of "sustainable business" and "sustainable production" with neo-liberal values such as "self-activation", "risk management" and "self rationalization". In other words, in their business models, personal attitudes and career aspirations, they mix values and practices usually ascribed to post-Fordism with "re-invented" Fordist traditions, for instance having a special feeling of obligation towards colleagues, customers and suppliers, who often come from under-developed countries. In certain milieus, "social entrepreneurs" are portrayed and promoted as role models for a new kind of entrepreneurship (Schwingenstein 2013).

In her Ph.D. project in progress, Barbara Lemberger also deals with a group of small and medium entrepreneurs who combine post-Fordist practices of self-economization with Fordist-like ideas of patronage, responsibility and leadership: In today's Germany, there are many extremely successful businesspeople of Turkish origin having climbed up to the middle class. In a historical and individual biographical situation requiring mobility, determination and the ability to cope with hardship, they profit from inter-generational experiences of migration and are able to "imprint" their experiences on the urban landscape of trade, business, and consumption. Undoubtedly, the developments in this milieu will feed into future debates on new bourgeois lifestyles influenced by the experience of migration (Lemberger 2011).

All in all, work research should pay more attention to synchronicities of the asynchronous and to the emergence of orientations in the world of work like these, which go beyond dichotomies such as Fordism/post-Fordism. Fordist and post-Fordist forms of production – and the corresponding modes of work and life – continue to co-exist in different contexts; as a result, alternative forms and *hybrid forms* integrating contradictory tendencies emerge (see Huber 2013). And yet, it is safe to say that industrial work has lost its "hegemonic position in terms of being a guiding principle" (Schönberger 2007: 69); and there surely is an advance of "service work", "knowledge work", and "affective work" (Lazzarato 1998) as well as lifestyles based on mobility and technology-guided forms of communication. In this situation, one thing is certain: a new type of worker is required, which is aptly called the "entrepreneurial self" by Ulrich Bröckling (2007). Workers of this type invest personal traits in the labor process by taking personal responsibility and involving their "ego", and they adapt their qualifications to rapidly changing job descriptions and locations of work. Their ability of coping with the "de-standardization" of the life-course (Kohli 1985) depends on the resources and expectations of the milieus they inhabit.

Instead of either subscribing to cultural pessimism or invoking an age of "new work", European ethnology can contribute to a more differentiated view by conducting explorative, empirical studies. A broad view on work biographies and the world of work is needed: They should not be analyzed from a perspective that sees the old welfare state as the norm, organized in national regimes, Fordist institutions and oriented towards traditional middle-class milieus. Rather, work cultures are characterized also by the perspective of migrants, both the work practices and lifestyles of new elites and of those less established coming from the margins of Europe, and ethnographic research should consider the transnational networks of mobile and immobile people – as Regina Römhild has suggested recently (Römhild 2010). We should transcend ethnocentric, traditional, middle-class perspectives and their regional and historical biases. In this process, the historical nature of discourses, individual practices, and individual attitudes will be uncovered.

Ethnographies of the New Work Life: A Short Postscript

Ethnographic case studies tend to adopt a holistic approach, which involves analyzing both micro- and macro-contexts and describing a range of insider perspectives. The examples drawn from the Munich research project demonstrated once again that qualitative research produces deep insights into the diversity of "(post-)Fordist" work settings; and that there are different ways in which workers take part in constructing these settings and attributing a meaning to their work. The micro-analytical approach adopted allowed the researchers to consider and judge how physical as well as immaterial forms of labor are embedded in existing pragmatic settings at work; and in certain broader social, moral and political frames that are often at odds with more traditional settings, beliefs and habitual orientations.

Ethnographic case studies enable us to explore the *vocabulary* used by interactive partners when they interpret work-related, interactive procedures. Moreover, they allow us to describe in how far the actors are attached or detached, committed or uncommitted; and whom they blame for their situation, or who they think is in charge. According to neo-liberal ideology, for example, they are to blame themselves and not an external instance like the market or the leaders of a company. Conversely, like in the picture frame factory, they often blame the "bosses" for hardly tolerable working conditions, but do not grasp the all-encompassing economic and political pressures faced by both employers and employees, which means that they struggle together – or, in times of precarity, as single individuals.

The work environments discussed are, in one way or another, deeply influenced by the processes of the subjectification, deregulation, and rationalization caused by the predominance of unrestricted market forces and by neo-liberal strategies of restructuring. The values of post-Fordism and the hegemonic practices of "reengineering" reflect a new "spirit of capitalism" centered on "employability" and commodification (Boltanski & Chiapello 2003). The new economic strategies and practices have not only transformed Fordist institutions, but they have also advanced into the organization of family life. In addition, they are also a serious challenge to the social aspects of work – for example the Fordist powers of collectivity and solidarity – as well as to the preservation of social peace. Currently, flexible capitalism is advanced by powerful new actors, such as the migrants who are constituting new, productive, bourgeois urban milieus and transnational economic networks. In some respects, the new forms of capitalism are marked by the blurring of the old social and spatial boundaries. In other respects, these boundaries are being reestablished, separating the winners and losers created by the new economic strategies. Thus, work ethnography should discover and reflect on the novel activities and creations of new social groups and move beyond terms with the fashionable prefix "post", such as "post-Fordism" and "post-modernity".[18]

Notes

1 Cf. Schmidt (2012) and Schmidt & Götz (2010). The aim of this interview-based study was to explore how new principles informing domestic work are developed in a changed work environment, and what kind of effects they have at the level of praxeology. The aim was to show the discrepancy between the traditional role of the mother and new demands placed on women in terms of self-management, flexibility, and the reconciliation of work and life.

2 See Götz, Huber & Kleiner (2010). This collection of case studies also contains the final report of the research project in question, which was led by the author of this article and conducted by 12 graduate students between 2008 and 2009 .Some of the master theses originating in this context have also been published elsewhere. See Schweiger (2011); Braun (2013); Schmidt (2012). Further information can be found here: http://www.lernforschung.volkskunde.uni-muenchen.de/lernforschung/spaetmoderne_arbeit/index.html.

3 This strategy promises to boost the efficiency of staff; to increase the contentment of both staff and customers; and to make staff adapt to market conditions. It is centered on weekly meetings dedicated to quality assurance: The performances of the employees are monitored; mistakes are supposed to be corrected permanently, so that there is a *Continuous Improvement Process* (*Kaizen* in Japanese).

4 In this article, I will mainly concentrate on the German-language studies in question in order to introduce some of their approaches to the international research community.

5 Obviously, this concept was coined by Richard Sennett (1998: 9).

6 The term "Fordism" refers to an epoch in the history of capitalism named after Henry Ford, the pioneer of the mass production of cars. It is usually associated with clear-cut temporal, spatial and content-related boundaries between work and non-work, but also with specific social boundaries, hierarchies and positions. Both blue and white collar workers and their trade unions negotiated with the employers over "class compromises" (relating, for example, to reductions in work hours and improved working conditions) (see Schönberger 2007: 73ff.). Fordism also refers to the fact that optimized labor processes in the factories led to increases in productivity and declining costs of production. The factory regime was based on detailed, fixed plans concerning the labor process and labor units, which were calculated and evaluated on the grounds of the Taylorist principle of "scientific management" (Taylor 1917). It was part of the Fordist class compromise that workers benefited from increases in productivity through rising wages. This created a productivist circle, where additional demand and rising levels of consumption secured economic growth.

7 In their book about the "normal chaos of love", Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1990) discuss the "structural hostility towards the family" characterizing the late modern world of work.

8 Another case study from our project (Schweiger 2010, 2011) looked at the styles of work of eldercare workers. Through participant observation, the researcher established that the compulsion to rationalize eldercare work due to reforms of healthcare in Germany meant that the immaterial aspects of the work were neglected. The workers had to execute a number of predetermined, timed steps when they did their care work: lifting the old people out of their beds; washing them; "filling them up" with bread rolls; "mobilizing" them to walk.

9 Reznikova's categories were based on Wittel's (1998) distinction between a "worker habitus" and a "bourgeois habitus". Wittel examined the introduction of team work. He showed that the post-Fordist paradigm of work is an update and an expansion of the historically rooted, bourgeois habitus and its ideal of personal responsibility.

10 As Reznikova points out in the case study above, the suffering and the fear, the expectations and the strategies of coping of many workers, in particular older ones, are still more or less based on Fordist ideas. Following the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu's "weight of the world" (Bourdieu et al. 1997), Franz Schultheis and Kristina Schulz have produced reports on contempo-

rary social life (2005) and have also detected a Fordist habitus. In the Western post-war societies, Fordist wage labor was *the* mechanism producing collective identities and communities (under different preconditions characterized by economic planning, this is also true of the socialist countries; see Friedreich 2008). It had including effects; once it was absent, processes of exclusion started (cf. Moser 1993).

11 For instance, recent texts by Chavdarova (2010) und Petrova (2010) suggest that the Fordist forms of wage labor did not act as a guiding principle shaping the thoughts and actions of the people everywhere in Europe. In Bulgaria, illicit employment and precarious forms of securing one's livelihood have for some time enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy and are widely accepted. Bulgaria is a country where there is a high degree of mistrust in the State and in state institutions. As a result, the shadow economy has a long tradition as a legitimate institution.

12 In the article in question, Bausinger (1978) conducted a "re-study" of the "Fischerkommünen" (fishing collectives) on the Baltic islands of Rügen and Hiddensee originally studied by ethnographer Reinhard Peesch (1961). He observes that these pre-industrial fishing collectives sharing boats were only working on a temporary basis; for several months a year, the fishermen worked in other areas. This suggests that even back then, "patchworks" of work activities existed that are usually seen as a recent phenomenon. On this type of combined economy, see also Warneken (2006) and Hauser (2009).

13 It is a characteristic trait of modernity that wage labor determined people's self-image, status, lifestyle and social environment – at least to the same degree as family origin, denomination and local, socio-cultural hierarchies and networks. Qualifications endorsed by the State became tickets to higher positions in the social hierarchy; they undermined the old, feudal class boundaries (even if there were of course limits to upward social mobility through education). A certain division of labor – blue vs. white-collar work – was seen, not just by Marxist-materialist social theories, as an important mechanism in the constitution of classes and identities.

14 On this blind spot of social research, see Schulte Beerbühl & D. Dahlmann (2011) and Lucassen (1993).

15 Lehnert (2012) also stresses that itinerant traders were of importance for the emergence of capitalist consumer markets. Other contributions that are exceptional in their attention to short-distance mobilities can be found in particular in Austrian migration research. A good example is Oberpenning & Steidl (eds. 2001). Obviously, there are extensive accounts of working life in the nineteenth century; see Kocka (1983, 2012) and Kocka & Offe (2000). And yet, there is a lack of historical work research focusing on mobile people, especially those operating locally. Much of the current work in German language in this area examines the multifaceted forms of spatial, social and intellectual mobility, which are presented as by-products of post-modern globalization (see, e.g., the contributions to Götz et al. 2010). But it often operates without a historical comparative perspective looking at pre-industrial societies.

16 Michael Vester (2009), a political scientist, provides analyses of the social structure for the German case based on representative opinion polls. These provide evidence for growing social polarization: firmly established middle-class milieus are increasingly threatened by precarity and downward social mobility. In the French case, Castel (2009) has worked extensively on the "return of social insecurity" in the last thirty years.

17 For a summary of the debate in the social sciences on the multiple reasons for the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, see Schönberger (2007) and the contributions to Castel & Dörre (2009) and Boltanski & Chiapello (2003).

18 I would like to thank Barbara Lemberger, Katrin Lehnert and Petra Schweiger for their many helpful comments regarding this article, and Alexander Gallas for his professional help in translating and editing the first German text version deriving from a lecture that bears the title "Arbeit in neuen Zeiten. Ethnografien zu Ein- und Aufbrüchen", see, e.g., the online-video of the LMU Ringvorlesung "Arbeit im Wandel" (November 29, 2011), see http://videoonline.edu.lmu.de/node/3281.

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